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## Elected water boards proposed

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DENVER - A bill requiring water conservancy districts, including the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District, to have an elected board of directors is scheduled to be heard today in the House Agriculture, Livestock and Natural Resources committee.

The water district has proposed developing the Northern Integrated Supply Project, which would serve several municipalities but not Fort Collins.

The plan calls for developing the 170,000-acre-foot Glade Reservoir along U.S. Highway 287 north of Ted's Place, which would draw from several water sources, including the Poudre River.

The Fort Collins-based Save the Poudre organization opposes the plan.

House Bill 1330 would not necessarily stop the Glade project from moving forward because of timing, lawmakers said.

Save the Poudre organizers say the Glade project is a good example of why conservancy district boards should be elected and not appointed.

"The district is not accountable to the taxpayers right now, and one of the ways that they aren't being accountable is by pushing (the Glade) project forward," said Save the Poudre spokesman Gary Wockner. "(NCWC), which we all pay taxes to, seems hellbent on draining every bit of water out of every river in the state of Colorado, and the taxpayers have no representation on this issue. At this point, the farmers have a voice, the cities have a voice but the river has no voice."

NCWC spokesman Brian Werner said the district's employees want to ensure that board members are capable and competent, no matter what avenue they take to get on the board.

"We're going to sit back and watch to see what happens," Werner said. "Give us good board members no matter how you get them to us is our motto."

Werner did say that it's important that board members have a good understanding of water issues and law, a provision that is in current statute but would be removed under the proposed legislation.

Rep. Randy Fischer, D-Fort Collins, who sits on the House Agriculture Committee, which will hear the bill, said he supports the legislation.

Fischer, an engineer by trade with experience in water issues, said he believes an elected board would provide more accountability to area residents.

"I have thought all along that water conservancy boards should be elected," Fischer said. "Right now they are appointed by a judge and are not accountable to taxpayers who are paying mill levies to these districts every year."

The House Agriculture Committee also will hear a bill sponsored by Berthoud Republican Rep. Kevin Lundberg that would establish a state fund to mitigate the impact of the pine beetle on Colorado forests.

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